



Aquatic Invasive Species NEWSLETTER

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Watercraft Inspection Numbers

July 27, 2018

Montana inspectors have stopped 12 boats with invasive mussels. The boats came from Arizona, Texas, California and the Great Lakes area. Most of the boats were passing through Montana destined for Idaho, Washington and Canada.

When a mussel boat is discovered, the watercraft inspectors decontaminate the boat, lock the boat to the trailer and notify the states or province where the boat is destined. Six of the boats had been recently purchased from another owner.



Inspectors at watercraft station operated by Blackfeet Nation



Watercraft inspection stations will operate through the summer months and close between Labor Day and the end of October, depending on the location. See CleanDrainDryMT.com for station times and dates of operation.

Comment on Response Plan

FWP is seeking public comment on two documents that would guide Montana's response to the detection of invasive mussels.

- The [Montana Dreissenid Mussel Rapid Response Guidelines](#) directs the process, protocols and coordinated effort Montana will use to respond to new dreissenid mussel detections.
- The [Missouri River Containment and Quarantine Plan \(MRCQP\)](#) provides additional containment and quarantine information relating to waters of the Missouri River Basin.

The final plans will be submitted to the [Montana Invasive Species Council](#) in November 2018.

The public comment period for this public notice ends on Aug. 13.

Public comment can be submitted [electronically](#) or by mail to Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Fisheries Division, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620.

46: Inspection stations in Montana

50,495: Boats inspected Jan 1 – July 17

12: Boats with invasive mussels found





Panel Make eDNA Recommendations

A panel of nationally recognized scientists in the field of environmental DNA (eDNA) convened in April to make recommendations that will guide the use and development of eDNA testing for the early detection of invasive mussels.

The use of eDNA is a rapidly evolving technology in need of standardized scientific protocols for the sampling, analysis, communication and verification of test results.

The panel was assembled in cooperation with the [Montana Invasive Species Council](#); [Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks](#); the [Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes](#); [US Geological Survey](#); and the [Flathead Lake Biological Station](#).

Information about the panel recommendations can be found at the [DNRC-MISC](#) web page.

AIS Laboratory

The AIS Laboratory analyzes water samples to detect the presence of invasive quagga or zebra (dreissenid) mussel larva called veliger. Because veligers are microscopic in size the samples are viewed under a microscope using a process called cross-polarized light microscopy.

FWP monitoring crews and other partner organizations use a plankton tow net to collect water samples during the summer months. Samples from high-priority areas can be processed within two weeks. If the lab detects a dreissenid veliger, the water sample is shared with two independent labs for verification.

The AIS Laboratory in Helena was established in 2005 in cooperation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The number of samples analyzed by the lab has increased so much that a second laboratory was established in Kalispell.

- 2005 - Lab in Helena established in cooperation with the Missouri River Basin Panel and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- 2005 – Processed 48 samples.
- 2015 – Processed 688 samples.
- 2016 – Processed 610 samples.
- 2016 – Mussel veligers detected in Tiber Reservoir and suspected in a sample from Canyon Ferry Reservoir.
- 2017 – Processed 1,670 samples. No mussels detected.
- 2018 – Processed 402 samples as of July 14. No mussels detected.

Monitoring for AIS

Montana's AIS Early Detection and Monitoring Program has been in place since 2004. FWP monitors for all aquatic invasive species, including zebra and quagga mussels, Asian clams, New Zealand mudsnails, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush, curlyleaf pondweed and other species not known to occur in Montana.



FWP Monitoring crew on the Missouri River near Townsend - 2017

The monitoring and early detection efforts have increased steadily over the years but nearly tripled in 2017. Since there are a variety of aquatic invasive species, different sampling techniques are used to increase the likelihood of early detection. In 2017, a total of 260 waterbodies were inspected in Montana.

See the [2017 AIS Monitoring Report](#) here.



AIS Curriculum for High Schools

The [Watershed Education Network](#) (WEN) has developed a curriculum for high school science classes called the [Columbia Headwaters Education Kit for AIS](#), or CHEK 4 AIS.

WEN constructed an education trunk that includes all the supplies and gear needed to conduct the eight lessons. The curriculum meets the [Next Generation Science Standards](#). Learn more at montanawatershed.org.

WEN piloted the curriculum at the Willard Alternative High School in Missoula. The students, inspired to share what they learned, designed a public service message that ran in the Missoulian newspaper in June.

Would you be impacted by a zebra or quagga mussel invasion?

Take this short quiz to find out!

Do you:

- ☐ use electricity?
- ☐ enjoy fishing?
- ☐ eat produce?
- ☐ like to visit Montana's beautiful lakes?
- ☐ like walking barefoot on the beach?
- ☐ want to avoid excessive boat maintenance?

If you checked any of these boxes, then mussels would affect you. Invasive mussels hurt everyone. WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Clean, drain, and dry your boat and gear
- Stop at all inspection stations
- Visit cleandraindrymt.com for more information
- Spread the message, not the mussel

Once introduced, zebra and quagga mussels are nearly impossible to eradicate. We are currently in the last major watershed in the U.S. without these mussels. Help keep it that way.



Casey Gallagher, with the [Milk River Watershed Alliance](#), had an information booth at the at SUPfest at Bear Paw Lake near Havre.



Casey Gallagher at SUPfest

Stand up paddle boards are classified as a “watercraft” and SUP owners must follow the same rules as boaters, such as having a life jacket and stopping at watercraft inspection stations. Casey also shared the Clean-Drain-Dry message at the Governor’s Cup Water Carnival near Fort Peck.

Upper Columbia Conservation Commission

[UC³](#) was established to foster cooperation and coordination between partners to prevent the introduction and/or further establishment of AIS to the Upper Columbia basin. UC³ is comprised of 9 appointed members and ex-officio federal agencies> They work closely with FWP and other AIS partners in Montana and throughout the region.

UPPER COLUMBIA CONSERVATION COMMISSION



Big Sky Watershed Corps

The Big Sky Watershed Corps is a [Montana Conservation Corps](#) program that places young professionals in Montana watershed communities to do research, project planning, education and community outreach. Here’s what one of the Corps members is doing.

